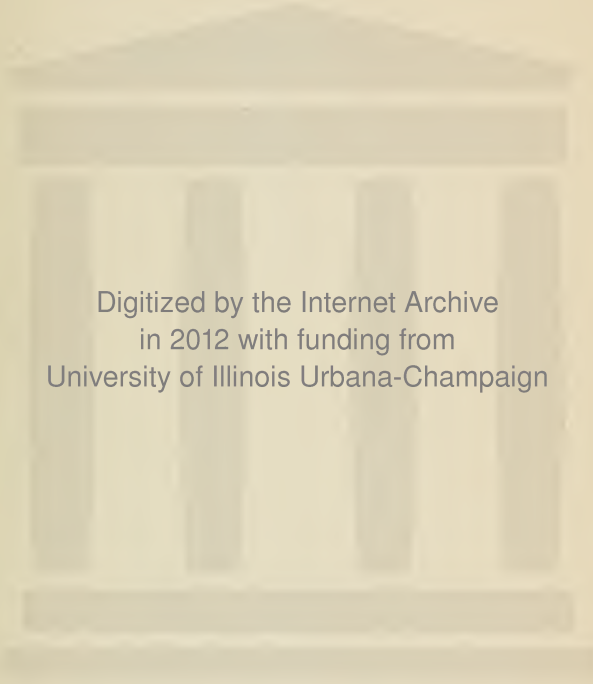


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ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY

John Henderson Powell, I.



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ILLINI POETRY

ILLINI POETRY

1918-1923

*Edited by
Bruce Weirick*



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1923

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Ill. Hist. Survey

Preface

With MASTERS, LINDSAY, SANDBURG, and SARETT, *Illinois* has in the last ten years had the good fortune to give to American letters perhaps half the good poetry which the decade has produced. By means of these men, and with *Poetry Magazine* in Chicago, the middle west has for the first time found a voice and has begun to sing. Irony, optimism, barbaric gusto, and beauty are here, chanted in verse of energy and joy. With what seems, to a region formerly little sung, almost a renaissance, these poets have appeared quite suddenly in the poetical firmament. Under such an impulse, it is not therefore to be wondered at that the universities should also catch at a strain or two. In the east and west there have been eddies. With NOYES and his group at *Princeton*, with the *Harvard* and *Yale* series of student verse, with WITTER BYNNER at *California*, to mention no more, students have of late written much shall we say, reputable poetry, with now and then something a bit more than reputable.

As gardens for poets our universities will always be important. It is therefore a vital matter in American letters to know from time to time how the arts flourish at these centers of learning. How especially in the middle west, the source of so much energy, industrial, social, and human. As yet there have been few soundings in these colleges. *Wisconsin*, *Michigan*, *Ohio*, *Chicago*, *Illinois*, have been relatively dumb, at least poetically; farmers, journalists, lawyers, and business men being about the height of their great argument. It is with diffidence, yet with a good deal of pleasure too, that *Illinois* breaks the silence with this anthology of

some of her recent verse. Yet after some thought it has seemed good that the silence should be broken.

The poems in the present volume were written during the last five years by the members of the Poetry Society of the *University of Illinois*. The society was organized in 1918 by MISS ALLENE GREGORY, daughter of the first president of the University, and then an instructor in English there. The group has usually consisted of some twelve or fifteen. At its fortnightly meetings the new poetry is read and discussed, and once a year there is an open meeting, at which the best work of the society is offered to the public. The reception of our poetry at those readings has encouraged the production of this volume.

The most distinguished member of the Society, LEW SARETT, does not appear here, as his two volumes of Indian chants, "*Many Many Moons*" (1920), and "*The Box of God*" (1922) are sufficiently known. The poems of LOIS SEYSTER MONTROSS, joint-author of "*Town and Gown*," we here present for the first time in any volume, though a book of hers "*The Crimson Cloak*" has been announced as in prospect. It is with some eagerness that we await the reception of such poems of hers as "*Taj Mischa*," and "*The Crimson Cloak*." One other writer, LEM PHILLIPS, a southern Indiana boy, who saw two years of the war, and had done two or three summers of sailing in the Black Sea and Indian Ocean, died last year. His free buoyant character, and the promise of his all too few poems and stories make his loss especially poignant. The only faculty members whose work is here included, are GREGORY, LANDIS, SYFORD, and WEIRICK.

If this volume of *Illini* poetry reveals a background and society not so exclusively agricultural and industrial as some of our sharper critics like to ascribe to us, we can only apologize for not running as true to form as they might wish. The stimulating presence of MR. STUART P. SHERMAN

in the department of English may account for some of our perverseness. The dynamic energy generated by an institution that wishes to despise no kind of achievement that may benefit man or the state, may account for the rest. If this work may seem to others a worthy performance, its authors will rejoice. And if it may have the luck to arouse from silence our songless university contemporaries in the middle west, it will perhaps still more have served its purpose as a book well born.

BRUCE WEIRICK.

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ILLINI POETRY

Allene Gregory*

Personality

I am a stained glass window,
Little of light comes through,
Flecked with a thousand colors,
Crimson, and mauve, and blue.
Yet when you praised my colors,
Only the dear stars knew
How I longed to shatter my painted glass
And show far worlds to you.

To Certain Alumni

I have kept faith with you, O wistful faces,
O clear young eyes that once I filled with dream,
Giving you tidings of high lonely places,
Bringing you legends of white peaks agleam.

I did not prate of heights and stay unquesting;
My feet are bleeding with the bitter scars
Of lonely ways where I have passed, unresting,
Seeking the paths that lead beyond the stars.

My youth was yours. I have lived, and done with
speaking.

I had not guessed the cost of being free,
The anguish of the quest. Yet with your seeking
I have kept faith. Have you kept faith with me?

*[In private life Mrs. Edmund Allen.]

To an Ag Freshman

Gaunt, awkward, prairie born,
Farm bred, your slow speech lacking every grace,
The wistful boyhood of your lonely face
Stirs us. We vaguely wish you less forlorn.
We teach you, and our patience is half scorn.
Yet your clear eyes
Are deep with peace we lack, we over-wise;
What secret have you learned among the corn?

Respectability

I hug my hearth fire, cozy-warm,
Approved by wise and loving friends;
She passes in the marching storm
Down the long road that never ends,
Rebel and outcast, beggared, free,
The woman that I dare not be.

I have a task that fills my days,
I do it with a right good will
And earn thereby both bread and praise;
Why does her mocking laughter still
Burn to the very soul of me,
The woman that I dare not be?

A sanctuary I would seek
On Sundays in the House of Prayer;
But when I kneel among the meek,
Between me and the altar there,
God's scorn in her clear eyes, I see
The woman that I dare not be.

All Hallows

The saints of God, they frighten me. Their faith
is always whole.

They stand like tall white candles by the altars
of the soul.

I have so many wayward moods that take me un-
awares,

I had rather ask God's poets to help me at my
prayers.

Saint Orispin was a workingman before he made
his vow,

Theresa was a woman once that wears a halo
now,

And Hugh of Lincoln played the games that little
children know;

But they were all so innocent, those lives of
long ago.

The poets were a feckless lot, and seldom over
wise,

And many wrong and foolish things had value
in their eyes;

They trailed their visions in the dust, were often
somewhat blind—

One dare confess to them that God is very hard
to find.

So, Dante, teach me love and hate, and Chaucer,
show me mirth,

And Langland, give me plowman's faith that
labors close to earth,

And Shelley, sacred heart aflame with sense of
human wrong,

Make me a valiant rebel for the weak against
the strong.

Don C. Allen

Moonstones: A Song for Irish Fairies

Watch the Moon when she is blue,
Just before the break of day
In her cloudy rendezvous,
While you watch her slowly say....

“Crystal globe of Heaven’s light
Drop a tear or drop a sigh
In the basin of the night.”
Croon the Moon a lullaby,
She will answer bye and bye
With a tear-drop or a sigh.

Watch the Moon when she is blue,
Watch the land and watch the sea;
If they are the same then you
Sing beneath the bramble-tree....

“Queen of Heaven, bright and fair,
With your coronet of green,
Listen, listen to my prayer.”
(Pan has crossed the sky unseen.)
She will know whate’er you mean,
Drop her coronet of green.

Watch the Moon when she is blue
In the tarlatan of dawn
Sprinkled with her retinue;
Sing them lightly leprechaun....

“Pearl of Heaven, pure and cool
'Gainst a cloth of indigo;
Let your tear-drops make a pool. . . .
Little wells of soft Moon-glow.”
She will answer you, I know.
Leave a pool of soft Moon-glow.

L'Envoi.

Come, waken, sprite of Fairy Lands,
The Sun is near the noon.
Then let us flee across the sands
Where lazy waters croon;
There we will fill our trembling hands
With tear-drops of that Moon.

Rann for Mary Magdalene

“A ghloir ionmhuin dob’ iséal aoibhinn
An fíor go gcualas tren shuanaibu thu.
No an fíor an t-eolas ata dom’bheo-ghoin.
Mo bhron, sa tuamba nil fuaim na guth.”
From ‘A Chinn Aluinn!—

Oh woman with the storm cloud’s hair;
Seller of Love for sordid fee,
Go hide thyself from common stare,
For Christ is calling, calling thee.

Oh woman with the primrose thighs;
A thousand men have lain with thee
But aye the sadness of your eyes
The lover Christ can comfort thee.
Oh woman with the wild thing’s heart,
Hiding in wood, in nook, in tree

From hounds of Lust, forspent thou art
The hunter Christ will pity thee.

Oh woman bankrupt of thyself;
Waster of Love, vain debauchee;
Slave to men's eyes for little pelf
The Shuiler Christ will buy thee free.

Oh woman of the cold, cold kiss,
Whom no true lover ever knew;
Weep, woman, is it not for this
That Christ will die for you, for you?



Delia Bell

City Curtains

I like the little curtains at the windows.
When morning breezes swing them to and fro,
They make a cool white brotherhood of houses,
Of closely packed, and drooping soulless houses,
That grow so tired of standing in a row.

The dimpled baby died across the high way
The morning that the other baby came;
The little curtains waved their arms in greeting
Across the street in lovely ruffled greeting,
All clean and white and hemstitched, just the same.

I like the little curtain screens at evening
With all the rosy homelight streaming out;
It may be that behind them hearts are aching,
It is such balm to know when hearts are aching
That little curtain screens are close about.

Prayer

I saw his head was bald, when he knelt,
And that he stooped so slowly. He was old.
I smiled.
An ignorant, aged, trusting child, I felt.
I wondered if he found the dim church cold.

What is it stained glass windows do
To make a gray old man look warm and bright?
That they are dark and colorful is true,
And yet,
Why should I sometimes dream of them at night?

e Delia Bell

T. P. Bourland

Incident's Close

Now we must go our ways.
Long days
And loneliness our portion for a while.
Our hands touch,
And we smile.
Much beauty has been ours;
Tall towers,
White castles, spires, high casements in the sky—
We built these,
You and I,
Our hands touch, and we smile;
What guile
We need, whose eyes must nothing tell.
Our lips say
"Fare thee well!"

To a Lady Far Away

Tonight, if you were here, I'd block
The silly hands upon the clock;
And I would turn to you and say
"My child, it never will be day
Unless we start the clock again,"
Then I would make a daisy chain,
And snare three little stars to light
Your face, if you were here tonight.
And if by chance black butterflies
Presumed to dwell upon your eyes,
I know an ancient spell we'd say
To frighten butterflies away.
I'd gather shadows from the wall
And bid them dance for us, and call
Our neighbor Pan, that he might blow
Mad tunes upon his reed . . . I know
We two would find a magic way
To lay the ghost of yesterday,
And deck the garments of the year
With flowers tonight . . . if you were here.

The Early Summer of Philosophy

I weary you with praises. I have said
That grace envelopes you; that on your head
Some god had set the seal of loveliness;
That one touch of your hand, one slight caress,
Flamed like a burning star. That on your mouth
Slept all the scented blossoms of the South,
I said to you. And little songs I made
To your two little feet, for that they played
Most wantonly and sweetly in my heart;
And of your eyes, I said there was no art

Could shadow forth their beauty: that your eyes
Were Lethe, Fairyland, and Paradise.
So would I sing you ever. "But the days
"Are swift," some say. "And all this windy praise
"Is but a sorry effigy of you."
(Daughter of Eve, your eyes are very blue.)
But say the wise, "This is frivolity;
"What boots this talk of lip and hair and eye ?
"They are illusion. Fix, O youth, thy mind
"On matters of the pure, grave, vital kind.
"Whence come ye? Ponder that. And ask thyself
"Why seek ye earthly love and earthly pelf?

"To what end livest thou? Where sail thy ships?
"O, babble not of hair and eyes and lips!
"Life is too real . . ." or was it "real" they said?
My child, the wise are wise. Incline your head
While I will whisper high grave things to you:
Daughter of Eve, your eyes are very blue.

Hollow Log and Hollow Reed

With me it has been ever so.
Through all the winter time I go
Austere, and mindful of my book,
Deaf to sweet music; and I brook
No byplay of white arms. Pierrette
Beckons in vain, the jade. While yet
The elms of green are innocent,
I keep a lonely watch, content.

But oh, there comes an April night
When all the town is strangely white,
And little questing winds blow by;

And when that night is on me I
Do shortly fling my book away,
And seek Pierrette, the jade, and say
"My child, the time has come to play."

I cannot say the springtime nay.
Perforce, when lifts the winter fog
I venture from my hollow log
And cut a hollow reed to blow.

With me it has been ever so.

A Postscript for Unmailable Letters

'Though I send these lines to you,
And your name is writ above,
Some of them may not be true.
All my fancy's yours, but love . . .

Love is quite a grave affair.
(As I wrote I heard a slow,
 vagrant, sentimental air.)
Music often moves me so.

Hypnosis

Oh Ph. D
Your Phibate key
Entrances me.

Its face displays
The solar rays

Of golden days;
Hypnosis shakes
My mind; it makes
Me feel like snakes.

You lecture there;
Thin is you hair!
Earnest your air.

But dancingly
Your Phibate key
Blinks—mockingly.

It's getting me.

T. P. B.

*Nous Sommes Ici—Parceque—
Nous Sommes Ici*

We sit, O learned doctor, at thy feet,
And daily, with our costly fountain pens
Take notes concerning *homo sapiens*
And calculus and plant disease and Crete,
And when you say black's white, we write it down;
And when you prove it true we acquiesce,
Knowing full well no errors effervesce
Behind the stately rampart of your frown.

And, though our minds are shrouded with a fog,
And though our poor perceptions seem quite rough,
And though at times you leave us obfuscated,
We daily stay to hear your monolog,
Because we know, if we stay long enough,
We will, in God's good time, be educated.

Outrage

I wear suspenders, and when nights wax cold
A flannel night-shirt comforts me. At times
I con John Dryden, and the rocking rhymes
Of Alec Pope have solaced me of old.
I'm absent minded. My ungartered hose
Most comfortably sag. My tie's a sight.
I never kiss my female friends good night.
My spectacles slip downward on my nose.

Grant that I smoke seegars, and sometimes dance,
And grant that once a barmaid on me smiled:
Yet Time has cooked me in his casserole
More than enough. So tell me, what mad chance
Prompted Pierrette to say, "You silly child,
You never will grow up!" . . . *God bless my soul!*

Cosmology in a Cafe

SCENE: *A place of amusement.*

PERSONS: *A young man, an auditor, and revelers.*

TIME: *The moribund year.*

I know her escort slightly. He's a man
Of nice adjustments, and experience, and tact,
And taste in wenches. This one—does she not?
Dances with grace and manifest delight.
They're pleased, each with the other. Pretty babes!
His hand, like a white leech upon her back,
Her silken back . . . and note his gray, cold eyes.
Now, that's a dancing ditty. What's it called?
"Hot Lips" you say? Ha! Right well named. A
tune

That roves precisely yet insistently along:
Empedocles, gone mathematic mad,
And by some paradox inflamed with love,
Might whistle such from Aetna.
Music and mathematics, intermeshed.
Why not? I've heard that all the world
And all things incident to all our lives
Are numbered fictions. Why not music, then?
Indeed, this hampered and desirous flesh,
Moved in the dance by mandate of the powers
Of X and Y. The sallow waiter there,
Cursing the bus-boy in sheer weariness,
The lady who spilled wine upon my coat,
And that absurd Silenus with the drum,
Are, like as not, but interwoven digits:
Mere permutations in arithmetic.
Likewise all things. Go down the shadowed street:
Each dog and cat and man and shuttered house,
Each footfall in the night, all things, in fine,
A man might stumble on between this room
And the last quiet star, do come to naught
Unless they curve and coalesce to form
This passionate equation we call life.
On any other terms these things lack point,
Or so it seems to me. The science men
Will bear me out. They calculate that space,
Instead of going on, and on, and on,
Curves in upon itself: is limited.
A pretty thought to play with, is it not?
The Universe a sphere, surrounded by
Unspatial space, or something of the sort:
Within whose glassy, flawless boundary wall
We dance and contract debts, write books, make
love,

And move about, according to the place
And power and number of our formulae.

Somewhere behind Arcturus squats the King,
Ornately decked in nothingness; midstream
In uncreated night; staring eternally
Upon his round, minute domain, with tempered
pride.

Waiter, the check—and give this note
If opportunity presents itself
To that slim lady with the jade-green fan.
At least, I'll know her number in this scheme.

The Rocket

One summer night the world was empty and quiet.
The trees and the stars, all in their places,
Shrouded their secret forms in purple mists;
O, the world was a giant asleep in a perfumed
chamber,

Dreaming and drugged and dead that night.
Shadowed, adrift in the infinite somnolence,
Where the ghost of a house, and the ghost
Of a lilac-scent brooded, lost and desolate,
Somewhere

My white face looked from a window.

Out in the fringe of the town
I saw a rocket splendidly defy the night—
Golden, and bright, and proud,
Invading infinity with a fantastic happiness
It spread its jeweled robes,
Lifted its gallant head,
And was gone.

You were like that.

Quincy Guy Burris

To a Woman's Hands

I would obey thy least commands,
 Serve thy behests implicitly,
Frail, pallid, lovely, fluttering hands.

Blithely I suffer reprimands
 From thee, pale, drooping fleurs-de-lis.
I would obey thy least commands.

Lightly as Spanish sarabands,
 Come, hover o'er me momentarily,
Frail, pallid, lovely, fluttering hands.

Give me to conquer men, or lands,
 Or wander on a shoreless sea—
I would obey thy least commands.

Curved gently as long, sea-lapped strands;
 Translucent as chalcedony,
Frail, pallid, lovely, fluttering hands.

Be they as many as the sands—
 Or nobleness or infamy—
I would obey thy least commands,
Frail, pallid, lovely, fluttering hands.

A Villanelle of Violets

Love, disillusion, wild regrets
 Within me stormed, but after came
This Villanelle of Violets.

Stately as ancient minarets—

A form; a face, riant, to claim
Love, disillusion, wild regrets.

Eyes, like two mystic amulets,

Held in their depths the flowers that name
This Villanelle of Violets.

The purl of silver rivulets

Hid in a voice, and in that same,
Love, disillusion, wild regrets.

Fierce lips—the breath of mignonettes

Between—seared mine, seared these which frame
This Villanelle of Violets.

Drear thoughts these are; swift silhouettes,

Where erst dwelt she who did inflame
Love, disillusion, wild regrets—
This Villanelle of Violets.



Garreta Helen Busey

The New Moon

The moon is a slender reminder
Of long-ago fealty vowed
As we sat in the curve of the crescent
And dabbled our feet in a cloud.

The cloud was a puff of rose petals;
Of gold from the sun was our swing,

Carved richly and hung by an angel
And swayed by the brush of his wing.

It lulled you to sleep with its swaying;
You rested your head on the horn,
Till, quietly, as you lay dreaming,
You slipped to the earth—and were born.

My outcry of swift desolation
From star to star echoed aloud—
An instant poised there on the crescent—
A dive through the rose petal cloud.

The search has been lonely, beloved,
And earth shadows darken our eyes,
But the new moon has let down her ladder!
Come, let us climb back to the skies!

White Jasmine

Tinkle of glass, of cups the genial clatter
Mingle with gay inconsequential chatter.
My lady at the tea-urn plays her part,
Blushingly fair by nature and by art.
“Lemon or cream?” she queries graciously,
And pours the steaming jasmine-scented tea.

Fragrance of Jasmine!—Lo! the spell
Bears me across sun-jewelled deeps
To where an age-old cloister rears
Its slender columns. Near the well,
Whence russet monks, for countless years,
Have drawn its cool and sparkling stream,
Frail jasmine grows, as waxen-white

As tapers, in the dimming light
Before cathedral altars, gleam
Unlighted. Now, with falling dusk
And vesper bell, the garden sleeps,
And nun-like flowers spill their musk,
As incense, on the night—

Through time and space comes laughter teasingly,
Calling me back to courtesy and tea.

We Would Forget

We would forget the gold and purple past,
Rise from its shadows and shake free at last
Our wings, all drenched with beauty and with pain,
To mount exultant through the sun and rain.
We struggle, but we cannot rise, nor spread
The pinions of our spirits, for the thread
Of love has bound them fast to other years,
In clinging cobwebs, jewelled with our tears.

On Reading Poems Old and New

The flavor of old songs is on my lips—
Songs rare and mellow with the flowing years,
Wistful with dreams of love, sharp with its tears,
Catching the sea-gull's rhythm, as it dips
And swings in air, or pulse of wind that whips
The ocean; battle hymns; the chanted boast;
The ringing, fierce "Aoi!" of Norman host;
And songs of men that dared the sea in ships.

Old songs are put away, like precious wines,
In dusty flasks that gather cobweb strands

To mark the years; and when the poet sips,
Drinking such Tuscan sunlight as the vines
Drew in, long years ago in far-off lands—
The flavor of old songs clings to his lips.

The Lincoln Ox-yoke

1919

An ox-yoke, rude, and marred, and weather-dyed,
Fashioned in curves of strength by hero hand!
A Lincoln drove the shaggy beasts it spanned,
Across the prairie—he, the destined guide
To liberty and union nation-wide!
Now scarlet-belted peasants walk the banks
Of Bosnian rivers. By the creamy flanks
Of oxen, strong, white-garmented, they stride.
These men who fought for freedom, and are free,—
Thou home of Lincoln, these men turn to thee!
Their land new-won, bewildered still their thought,
They turn to thee for lessons Lincoln taught.
To wider skies his standards be unfurled—
Union and liberty for all the world!

Rain at Evening

I saw the silver-footed rain,
Pursued by shafts of flaming light,
Come stealing down a forest lane
Into the depths of night.

The tinkle of her passing feet
Upon the leaves, came to my ears,

And on my brow fell, wondrous sweet,
Her cool and fragrant tears.

They were the beauty of the world,
Distilled into a magic draught,
Which, from a leafy chalice, pearled
With shining drops, I quaffed.

And thenceforth an eternal pain
Drives me across the moonlit hills
To mountain torrents, where again
The cup of beauty fills.



Helen B. Carr .

Domine

Thou sender of the drifting clouds,
And sower in the sun,
Shall I be like to turn to thee
When all my days are done?

Men say thou canst not travel by,
In valley train and prairie road,
Stand at the horses heads and aid
The shifting of the load.

They say thou canst not laugh with me,
And smile upon the dawn,
Nor stand with me on silent peaks,
When the shades of dusk are drawn.

Thou sender of the drifting clouds,
And sower in the sun,
Shall I be like to turn to thee
When all my days are done?

A Cat Scratch

par M'selle Mrrarr

Chilly little ankles, chilly little bean,
Isn't she the classiest thing,
That you've ever seen?
Rawh!

Silly little topknot, silly little heels,
Like a "Dame in Paris"
Seen in seven reels.
Haw!

Vampy little spit curl, lampy little eyes,
Wonder what does happen,
When she ups and cries
Maw!

Smartest little skirt length, like potato peels,
When the blowsy wind blows,
Wonder how she feels?
Caw!

Cheeks as red as roses, Lor' knows where her nose is,
Of all the U. I. posies,
Isn't she the queen?
Naw!

Paw'd
Jaw

Maw'd
Haw
She's too raw

AW!
NAW!!

Chorus:

Chilly little ankles, chilly little bean,
Isn't she she the dumbest thing,
That you've ever seen!



Esther Colvin

Youth Memories

A gray house—near a gray wood;
A low stone wall, thick-covered with vines,
The bright, tender green of leaf-buds, peeping
through;
The scent of wet, wild roses along narrow lanes;
Wind and driving rain and
The sullen, deep murmur of the Merrimac:
All these—and—
Death, thin, cold, immeasurably just,
Lurking, watching—behind closed doors.

Lament for One Just Dead

The house is very strange and still, tonight.
The firelight gleams upon the wall

And touches the quaint, carved chair in the corner,
With a glowing, tender light.
Outside, the dusk calls softly.
Long blue shadows stretch across the lawn
And, in the West, golden and beautiful,
The light still lingers.
The trees along the avenue are gray and slender
in the twilight.
Through the open window, the lilting laugh of a
child floats in—
And the quick, happy tones of youth.
Softly, over the hush, the chimes ring out.

I shall never see your face again—
And I shall never hear your voice.

Our Street

as seen by Margaret Ann, aged eleven

Our street is so very quiet and sedate,
With prim, gray houses and precise gardens
And close-cut lawns and hedges,
That even the wind scarcely ever blows there.
I think it is afraid of the people
Who live in the prim, gray houses
And who walk in the precise gardens
And on the well-kept lawns.
For, just around the corner,
On the little street that goes twisting down
To the long, blue river,
Stands a tiny, English cottage,
With roses growing all about the wide, low door,
And with tall tiger-lilies blooming

And great trees waving friendly arms,
Over the queer-red-tiled roof.
And sometimes,
Cool, soft breezes blow.
They set all the green leaves whispering,
And the tiger-lilies blowing,
And the roses nodding
On their long, thorny stems
And sometimes,
The wind blows hard and fast
Until the green leaves dance up and down
And the roses bend from side to side like
Great tall reeds by the water-side
And the tiger-lilies riot.
I wish I lived in a little English cottage
On a queer, little street
That goes twisting down to the river.



Francis C. Coughlin

Analogy

Spring does not come with fanfares high and shrill,
Ah, Spring comes softly, nonetheless but true,
Over the quiet plains when earth is still
Under a silvered chasuble of blue
Then little, babbling wood-locked winds beguile
With old, old tales of love's sweet retinue
Both leaves and lovers for a little while.....
I cannot tell, but I may think of you,
Ah, love comes softly nonetheless but true.

Arthur R. Curry

The Jeweler

The jeweler put out a velvet pad
Pleasing to touch and yellow as pure gold.
Thereon he placed a row of glowing rubies;
Then, nearer me, a row of cold white diamonds;
And last, a row of tranquil amethysts;
Then looking up to catch my admiration,
"These," he said, pointing, "are erotic sonnets,
And these are poems of the intellect,
And these are of devotion and the spirit.
Some lapidary, taking stones of value,
Has made them into gems of sparkling beauty.
But see you this," he said, the while withdrawing
A purple pad whereon a necklace lay,
A coil of lucent pearls. He raised them up
And fondled them between us and the light.
"No lapidary, friend, is vain enough
To touch an instrument to one of these.
These are the lovely thoughts that move in beauty
Like maidens sporting in a lily pond."
He placed the necklace on the purple pad;
Then, looking up, and pointing while he spoke:
"This is the poetry that needs no art
But that inherent in the form God gave it.
We make our diamonds, but we search for pearls."

The Reference Librarian

One day I thought I'd try her out,
I'd heard the neighbors talk about
Her having special education

To help her locate information.
Well now, says I, I want to see
If she can find some facts for me.

I've read a scattered heap you know,
Since forty-seven years ago,
And I allowed to ask some questions
That didn't have the least connections
With what folks are supposed to know.
I wrote 'em down in order, so:

What is the height of Eiffel tower?
What makes my apple cider sour?
And then to test the Bible knowledge
Of them that study off at college,
I asked her where Cain got his wife!
And last, I asked the source of life.

I thought the girl would be amazed,
Instead of that, not even fazed,
She told the height of Eiffel tower,
Explained what made my cider sour,
Discussed Cain and the land of Nod,
And said the source of life was God.



David V. Felts

Chinese lanterns idly swaying,
Palm hid Sax and violin playing,
Couples round the terrace swaying,
Moon and everything.

But I, lonesome and rejected
Watch the party; I'm neglected.
Things are just as I expected
In the Spring.



Spring smiles on from dawn till gloaming
Nature's creatures go a-homing
Youth and maiden idly roaming
Wander hand in hand.

Bursting buds, caressing breezes,
Nice warm mud that softly squeezes,
Little birds and brooks and beeses,
Boy! Aint Nature Grand?

To Dorothy

I might have told you, you are very fair
(I could have said as much and known it true)
I might have been much nicer, Dot, to you
(I wish I had; perhaps I didn't dare)
I might have told you, you have pretty eyes
(I always liked them, brown with dancing light)
I wish that we had danced for just one night
(I am conceited; yet, that's no surprise)
But still we played and laughed and talked each
day
And ground out copy for the "dirty sheet"
And oftentimes you brought peanuts to eat
And brightened up an ordinary day.
But now you've gone and left me where we played
It's Spring and nice and Gee, I wish you'd stayed.

Marcus Selden Goldman

Novum Carmen Veterum

"I praise not old things for the new are better."
So in his pride did once Timotheous sing,
Till drawing near in wrath, the Spartan ephor
Cut with his sword each golden cithara string.
And after him no more was wondrous music
Heard in the cities of the Hellenes
And they who would have drunk the wine of song-
craft,
Found in the Muse's chalice only lees.

"I do not mourn the golden age of heroes:
Today for me is golden," Ovid said,
Turning his face toward the present glory,
Turning his back upon the mighty dead.
And after him there came no laurelled poets,
Winning song-kingdoms for the Latin tongue;
The sisters nine forsook the banks of Tiber,
Leaving the songs that might have been, unsung.

So now in quick impatience and in anger
Men turn them to new verses and new themes,
Forgetful that the art of old is deathless,
That youth eternal dwells in olden dreams.
Yet may the gods' just anger be averted
If here and there choice spirits still shall hold
Unscorned the memory of old songs and singers,
And tell anew the tale of glories old.

Paul Nissley Landis

What though of late we've scarcely met,
And each has smiled on other loves,
Does ever wanderer forget
His home, however far he roves?

Hearts are gypsies in the spring,
Knowing not a fixed abode;
But half the joy of wandering
Is coming back the homeward road.



My heart is like a little road
That will not travel true,
But wanders ever back to join
The high-road that is you.

But high-roads heed not little roads,
And neither know nor care
If little roads return again,
Or when they go or where.

So must we wind our ways through life
Till, lost, I come to rest,
Forlorn on some forgotten moor,
Or happy on your breast.

Ghosts

Life is a little troubled sleep
Within a haunted room

Where ghosts called Joy and Sorrow creep
About amid the gloom.

Twin figures of the fancy spun—
Though very real they seem—
The one a phantom flame, and one
The shadow of a dream.

But soon or late a dawning light
Breaks on the dream-tossed head
That, waking, hears from out the night,
Far off and faint: "He's dead."



When as a child I found a pretty thing,
I put it in a box beneath my bed —
Trifles like buttons and an old doll's head,
Some bits of colored glass, a tinsel string,
The crown I wore one Christmas as a king
Of orient—and on rainy days I sped
The gloom of lonely hours with beauty bred
Of these bright bits in my imagining.

Still like a child I keep my little box
Of pretty fragments, which, when gray days come,
My heart with memory's golden key unlocks
And finds again an almost childlike bliss
In playing with the treasures drawn therefrom—
A few soft words, her smile, and her last kiss.



Day after day, year after year, he came
To dig among these musty books. It seemed

His eyes could bear no stronger light than streamed
Dust-dimmed through painted windows; passion's
flame

Burned not his shrunken soul; he could not claim
Companionship with men; he never dreamed,
He only dug in books, and this he deemed
Worth while to learn how Shakespeare spelled
his name.

And all the while some truant in a wood
Thrilled with the song of Rosalind, and one
Unlearned under Juliet's window stood,
And for an idler in the evening dells
Titania and Puck a romance spun,
And Touchstone tinkled merrily his bells.

Thrift

John Shultz had fifty thousand, wisely placed
In bonds and mortgages, and lived content
To farm. The land he owned and every cent
Were his by virtue of an even-paced
Increase of seven generations, based
On poverty that counted all it spent,
And learned from need in all life's testament
One single law: The blackest sin is waste.

So John wore overalls, and walked to town
To clip his coupons; and when Doctor Saul
Said that young John, who had been very ill,
Might eat some chicken, old John with a frown
Spoke of the lot would spoil, and wouldn't kill
One—since the boy could never eat it all.

H L, M. D.

"There's something less than courage in his sneers
At pain," we said. The careless way he rolled
A cigarette and flipped the match and told
The hearse to come, as he were ordering beers,
Made us believe that what he lacked was tears,
And hope we'd see him shiver with the cold
Of death. "He'll not be quite so bold,"
We smiled and waited, "facing his own fears."

They came to take him to the hospital.

Too late—he was a doctor, and he knew—
Knew also we'd be somewhere near to watch;
And so he walked, alone, though not too well
Down to the street, and for a last adieu,
Rolled one more cigarette and flipped the match.

Jim Moore

Jim never seemed to care for comforts, or
Perhaps they cost too much; at least he'd not
Complained a bit that year on year his lot
Had been to sneak about a dingy store,
All crammed with bags and boxes to the door—
No light, no air—and then somehow he got
Into his head to buy a burial plot
For him alone, with room for twenty more.
And when we questioned him, he waved his hand
To indicate the litter in the place,
And summoned all the strength he could command,
With joy anticipated on his face—
"I've been so damned hemmed in here, boys," he
said,
"I'd like to have some room when I am dead."

My Heart Grows Faint

My heart grows faint when I behold
The wives my friends have married;
I knew them, too, when they were girls,
With silken hose and clustering curls—
And figures easy to enfold,—
Thank God, I tarried!
My friends did not,—deluded churls!
And when I see them, there, I sigh,
But for the grace of God go I.

Amor Grammatici

Reproach me not, my dear, that I
Press not, impatient, passion's claim.
I cannot love like Anthony
In words of singing flame.

For I was born for milder things—
The quiet joy of books my part—
And schooled to shun the pain that clings
To high adventures of the heart.

So, safe with lamp and pipe and book,
I've played with nymphs of Arcady,
Loved Helen long, and dared to look
On Venus rising from the sea.

But dead queens teach not lovers shy
The grace a living queen to woo;
Yet count it something, love, that I
Renounce them all for you.

P. H. Landis

Isador Lipton

Spring Dawn

Spring, summer, winter, and the spring
Returning, to the woodlands bring
The orioles, and the orioles sing;

The alder boughs bud fresh and clean,
And there the silver sycamores lean
White arms against their first faint green;

While all around and everywhere
The swirling ground-mist, like a prayer
Rises on the morning air;

Earth lays her scented bosom bare,
The winged winds swoop down and bear
The incense they have gathered there;

And to the flaming east are gone
To lay their sacrifice upon
The crimson altars of the dawn.

O What a Lover Is the Sea!

Oh what a lover is the sea,
How soft and suave and fierce and free!

See with what a hungry hand
He laves the languor-laden land,
Fawning at his maiden's feet,
Breathing praises soft and sweet—

Yet I know that in the night,
In his passion and his might,
He will break and beat and moan
With fevered eyes and lips of foam,
And in the morn with soothing hands
Caress the bruised and beaten sands.

How oft my tingling fingertips
Caress your hair and eyes and lips,
How oft my frantic fingers tear
The wildernesses of your hair!

Oh what a lover is the sea,
How soft and suave and fierce and free!

Listen, Lem

Listen, Lem:

Do you remember now
The one you told about the bloody row
You saw once when you went ashore
At Mandalay—
Or was it Singapore?
Well, anyway,
How some black, weasel-eyed galoot
Got the willies drinkin' dago red,
And draws his bolo on a strappy Boer
You'd picked up at the Cape,
And tries to knife him dead—
Just because he didn't like his looks;
And how that Boer, just in the nick of time,
Grabbed at the naked, blue-edged blade
And held it, buried in his bloody fist,

And slowly, slowly bent it—
'Till it snapt!

It just comes to me now,
How, like that plucky-hearted Boer
In Mandalay—or Singapore,
You
Gripped the naked blade of life;
You knew
The poet's business is to take
The knife-edged things that go to make
The life-stuff of his art—
Men, women, things—
To crunch them in his bleeding fist,
To bend and break
And weld them to a purpose of his own.

O, I could say a futile word or two
About how sad it is to think of you
All covered over with black dirt;
But I know you don't mind it, Lem,
You who always *loved* the smell of earth;
And why should I be grieved
To think of you
Dissolved into the richest dirt
In all the world,
And sending up the tallest wheat
That ever grew,
Yes, and the whitest morning-glories, too.

Out on these laughing prairie lands
Where nothing sad will grow,
Nor any tree more solemn than an elm,
It's *hard* to lay your dead away;

And so we bring the willow from the south
And pine trees from the north—proud pines—to
cast

Their great, gaunt shadows o'er the plain by day,
And in the night, like old Norse gods,
To chant their swaggering sagas in their beards;
The while their drooping sisters from the south,
With tears of twilight in their gleaming hair,
Bewail our dead.

It's somehow good to know,
That somewhere on this treeless land
The great, orchestral pine trees stand,
Crooning chanties like your own
In a thund'rous undertone.

When I heard
That you were dead,
Without a word
I turned away—
What could a fellow say?

Solitaire

Who can make of loneliness a song?
It has no love, no fire,
No fever of desire,
No beauty, no pain—
One only knows the days are long. . . and long—
Ah, who can make of loneliness a song?

If love comes
In a swirl of passionate dance,

With lifted breasts
And waves of wet, sea-tangled hair,
Her fingers pluck respondent strings
Till flesh is flame
And fancy sings. . . .

Or when the amorous night
Grows musical with stars,
And that great pearl, the moon,
Lies buried in her bosom,
And the wind of a sudden
Comes warm from the hills—

 This, too, is song. . . .

Or pain—

One mother hears another is bereaved
Of her one only child;
She writes:

*When I heard that your baby boy was dead
 I pressed my own child closer to my breast.*

How could a plodding, tired-eyed mother know
These simple words were music . . . sad . . .
and slow?

Love, beauty, pain . . . these things,
Come swift . . . on wings
Storm-driven, musical and strong—
But who can make of loneliness a song?

Picnicking on Golgotha

Three crosses rise from a hill
To a laughing April sky,
Blood and black against blue
And mute as a stifled cry;

This is the Place of the Skull

And these, they are thieves, these two,
The other, between them, is Jesus,
Jesus, a certain Jew.

“O Christian men and women, Hell
Is yawning for your souls tonight;
Repent, the Judgment Day is near,
Come out of darkness into light.
Jesus wants you; come tonight;
Don't go and leave him in the lurch;
He can wash you clean of sin,
Come to Jesus, join the church.
'Behold, I stand at the door and knock.'
Open you sinners and let him in;
Do you want to burn in the fires of Hell?
Do you want to live and die in sin?
O come and be washed in the blood of Christ,
He suffered on the bloody tree
To win salvation for our souls,
To save poor sinners like you and me.
Stand up, stand up for Jesus Christ,
Hit the trail and take the cross,
Get off the devil's payroll now
And make the Son of God your boss.
There's heaven for Christian men, my friends,
Why should you be the devil's pawn?
Join the church and the preacher will say
Nice things about you when you're gone.
'Behold, I stand at the door and knock,'
And you, you sin and smoke and dance,
There's no salvation for your souls,
You haven't got a ghostly chance.
The devil is running your public schools

And dragging your children to the pit
Of Hell with heathen books and songs
Against the words of Holy Writ.
And worse—since Eve and Adam fell
And you young women paint and flirt
You've been the devil's choicest bait—
Your souls ain't worth a whoop in Hell.
'Behold, I stand at the door and knock.'
Come on, you sinners, hit the trail;
Jesus walks by your side tonight,
He'll keep you from the devil's jail.
Come on, come on, that's right, now more,
More souls for Jesus, hit the trail,
We've got the devil going now,
There go his cloven hooves and tail.
Come on, we've got him licked, come on,
Has Satan got your soul enticed
To Hell? Come on, O Hallelujah!
Hit the trail for Jesus Christ!"

Three crosses rise from a hill
To a laughing April sky,
Blood and black against blue
And mute as a stifled cry;

This is the Place of the Skull
And these, they are thieves, these two,
The other, between them, is Jesus,
Jesus, a certain Jew.

The Bitter Beauty

*Did I hear someone say
Great Homer never wept; That he found life
Surpassing sweet and sang it so?*

Suppose *you* were a poet, let us say,
And you chanced to be passing by one day
The storied ruins of some ancient town;
You know the place, here heroes lie; there is
An immanent presence in the very stones
For you, whose ears have learned their lesson
 well,
From countless bards who sang their great re-
 nown
In camp and castle. Ah, here is a theme
For some old, windy-bearded bard to tell.

There lies the gate; that pile was once a tower;
Here, it would seem, a kingly name is writ
In letters of eternal stone; men say,
That forests of broad pillar-bases once
Supported colonnades tremendous-tall
To grace the vast, dim-vaulted banquet hall.
Ah, who can guess what giants feasted here?
But doubtless they were such as fame relates,
Omnipotent, with iron-girded limbs,
With steadfast eyes, straightforward as the sun,
Who reveled in this hero-haunted hall
And garrisoned these lion-guarded gates,
And then, as now, the sequel was the same—
For men *may* feast and sing but men *must* fight—
At last the wonder-rumored galleys came;
Your poet's eyes can see the storm-touched prow

Of laden ships that lean against the moon
On distant, unimaginable seas.

Why come they here? What seek they in this
place?

What have men ever sought? A golden cup
With skill-wrought lions rampant on its face,
A purple robe, a jeweled crown or two,
A helpless, vanquished graven idol vowed
To serve before the triumphed altar of
The one true god; but more than all things else—
High-breasted women sculptural and proud.
They come and on the sea-rim they unfold
Their tents, all tapestried with cloth of gold;
What men are these that come to plunder lands
Upon the perilous bourne of all the world?
Bronze-browed and cedar-straight with sea-
bruised hands—

Of such are these; and you who are a bard
Can see, as never earth-blind men can see,
The bristling ranks, the strident shriek of horns,
The thunder crash of arms, the swift retreat,
The years of siege, brave sallies from the gates,
And then at last the sudden breach by night,
The wild alarm, the hard-contested fight,
Red battle rife beneath a blood-red moon,
Where drunken gods go staggering down the
streets

And tall night-wandering women pass.

Now is the moment of all silent things,
The pause before all final answers; calm
As folded hands when all their work is done;
The delicate-fingered daughters of old days

Are dust beneath unworthy feet; they sleep
Whose eyes could bend the brazen will of kings;
Their alabaster eyelids are as still
As carven eyelids of the Buddha . . . so
Superbly still . . .

Now in this moment such a wonder is
As only you can know, whose potent hands
Can open wide the many-bolted door
That leads to purple paths beyond the sun.
Time was when gentle-spoken shepherds saw
Wind-footed fairies tip-toe down the stars
And kiss their lilac-scented finger-tips
To all-believing men who watched below;
This was their boon to be enraptured so.
Yet even now who can but weep to see
In sticks and stones so much of mystery?
And whose eyes but a poet's eyes could guess
That trodden dust held so much loveliness?
And is it strange that our mysterious eyes
That hold the mirror to such loveliness
Should also hold the chalice of our tears?
For all that's lovely is sublimely sad,
And he, and only he, will ever know
The bitter after-taste of things most sweet
Whose eyes have seen the land where beauty
slept—

Who said great Homer never wept?

Mirza French Mackay

Cabin Sleep-Song

Clouds am a-sailin' an' win' goes woo-oo!
Ol' Mis', Marse Tom, an' lil' Miss Sue,
Bettah shet 'e win'ows up—goin' fo' to blew!—
 Massa ketch 'e chicken-hawk,
 Massa ketch 'e chicken-hawk,
 Massa ketch 'e chicken-hawk,—
 Woo-oo!

Mah ol' 'ooman make a hoe-cake,
Sot it in 'e ashes, sot it fo' to bake—
'Long come dat 'ar good-fo'-nothin' Jake—
 Massa ketch 'e chicken-hawk,
 Massa ketch 'e chicken-hawk,
 Massa ketch 'e chicken-hawk,—
 Woo-oo!

Heah dat chicken, sizzlin' in 'e pan!—
Come to 'is daddy, daddy's lil' man;
Ride on 'e hoss-back, give 'e lil' han',—
 Massa ketch 'e chicken-hawk,
 Massa ketch 'e chicken-hawk,
 Massa ketch 'e chicken-hawk,—
 Woo-oo!

Heah dat Marse Win', tearin' at 'e do'!
Storm am a-comin' fas', dat's dead sho'!
Mammy's got 'is bed fix', dar on 'e flo',—
 Massa ketch 'e chicken-hawk,
 Massa ketch 'e chicken-hawk,
 Massa ketch 'e chicken-hawk,—
 Woo-oo!

Anemone

Anemone! Anemone!

Thou harbinger of spring-to-be!

The gray bleak hills yet winterbound—

No bush or tree for miles around—

Are thy forbidding proving-ground,

Anemone!

The last late lingering drift of snow

Has scarcely disappeared, when lo!

Out on the hills, up through the sod,

Barren of green, thy bed of clod,

Thou pasque flower liftest hands to God,—

Anemone!

Not with thy cousin lily's grace

Thou show'st thy blushing orchid face;

But gowned in sober velvet, drest

In thy prim pussy willow best,—

A little country cousin guest,—

Anemone!

The Sunshine State's well chosen flower,

The emblem of her prairie dower;

The symbol of that dauntless band

Who, faring forth, possessed the land

Where thou as bravely tak'st thy stand,

Anemone!

No sheltering leaves for thee await;

The settlers of thy northern state

Found no more barren lodging here

Upon these open prairies drear,—

Thou sturdy little pioneer,—

Anemone!

J. R. McNeill

The Nature-Lovers

A country road winding through the hills—
A man and woman racing along in a powerful
motor car,
With a butterfly flattened against the radiator.

“Gee, ain’t the country grand!”

“Uh-huh, nature’s wonderful like this.”

The car whines out of sight,
Taking the nature-lovers back to the city.

Birds fly down from the trees,
The shrill cicadas resume their song—
Ah! well, the butterfly will not be missed.

Jeannette

Your eyes! Jeannette, mon dieu! your eyes!
So beeg, so sad, so full, heem are—
All tam heem have ze look surprise,
All tam heem look so still, so far!
Mon dieu, your eyes.

Une telle petite fille, Jeannette,
Such leetle, dainty girl, so small—
Une telle bebe pour Pierre Marquette,
Heem fear she’s are no girl a-tall,
Si frele, Jeannette!

What mak you cry? I see ze tear—
Heem cannot hide from Pierre Marquette;
So? You grow beeg, an’ please your Pierre?

You are a foolish girl, Jeannette—
Such foolish tear!

Give Pierre a kees, you bad Jeannette,
What mak you seem so sad, lak thees?
Give Pierre a kees, So! Hees forget
Si frele bebe, for one small kees
From hees Jeannette.

Ah! Pierre, hees very strong an' wise;
He chop ze tree, an' mak heem fall—
He does not weep ze tear a-tall;
He very wise!

But Pierre's Jeannette, mon dieu, such eyes,
So beeg, so sad, so full, heem are—
All tam hees have ze look surprise,
All tam hees look so still, so far—
Mon dieu, such eyes!

The Dancer

[I.]

The Dancer's gone, but in my memory
I hold the rapture of a wond'rous night;
It seem'd to me I never knew before
Life's ecstasy; that night its mockery
Was torn away; now life shall mock no more,
And truth reveal'd shows as a dawning light
How all the world doth dance in harmony.

[II.]

Flotsam and jetsam, down at the sea,
Dancing and whirling, eternally;

Out on the ebbtide, back on the flow,
Dancing in moonlight, mystically slow.

Dance for the dolphins, dance for the mew,
Dance where the waves roll, seagreen and blue;
Dance in fair weather, dance in the gale,
Leaping like devils, when the winds wail.

Flotsam and jetsam, playthings of chance,
Rhythmic, eternal, ceaselessly dance;
Waves on the seashore sob mournfully.
Flotsam and jetsam, eternally
Dance for the lapwing, dance for the gull,
Fast when the winds blow, slow when they lull.

[III.]

Grass on the prairie, dancing slow,
Nod to the winds that gently blow;
Winds of the south, with soft caress,
Winds with a lover's tenderness.

Grass on the prairie, dance with glee,
Dance with the wind in ecstasy;
Bow to the flowers, through the day,
Dance in the east wind's eager sway.

Trees in the forest, frenziedly
Dance to the north wind's buffetry;
Bend to the blasts and rise amain,
Dance with the rapture born of pain.

Grass on the prairie, storm-tost tree,
Dance till the moonlight floods the world,

Then while the winds rest, sleep enfurl'd,
Dance in your dreams, dance dreamily.

[IV.]

Up in the skies the stars dance with the sun;
Whole constellations join in that vast dance
And human folk grow old ere one step's done,
And kingdoms fade, before that far expanse
Of dancers has begun.

Dim eons pass—time mortals cannot know;
New mountains rise—the old are worn away,
New lands are form'd, and oceans overflow,
And in that time the Cosmic Voice doth say,
“How fast the dancers go!”

[V.]

The Dancer's gone, and I should long for her,
That we might dance again, as on that time;
I should be sad that only dreams remain
Where once she was, that I, the worshipper
Could let her go, and lightly take the pain
It cost me then. Her memory's sublime,
'Tis mine; and she, I sometimes wish she were.



Harold McKinley Mann

The Threnody of the Mourning Dove

All night I lay among the white stones,
Silent, staring, cold white stones.

Jupiter rose to cross the sky,
Rose to follow his course and die.

A plaintive longing note, the mourning dove,
Lost love, lost love, lost love, lost love.

Swift, a slender soft-curved girl, the moon,
Red with a fleeing passion, love at noon,
Fled in a virgin's half-unwilling fear
The first faint warnings that her love was near.

Swiftly she fled, but swifter still came he,
Unsatiated, love untasted, tokens spurned;
He rose from out the far off Eastern sea
And for an instant there as one they burned,
Their flaming loves entwined, forgotten flight,
A blood-red passion kiss of lurid light.
An instant, and remembering she was chaste,
The moon turned, wheeled in flight, a ghost of
paste.

The cooling sun sang with the mourning dove,
Lost love, lost love, lost love, lost love.

Prayer

Out of a sheltered life to this
Cold kiss,
Cold kiss,
Out of a sheltered life to this.

You cannot understand, you say,
Why I left George and came to stay
Here in this place of passion cold
Where love is bought and kisses sold

For passing gold,
Where souls don't count and painted lips
And counterfeit joys are the only sips
The spirit finds to brighten the way
Through the midnight darkness which marks my
day.

Listen, have you ever heard
The downy owl, the evening bird,
Chant through the night its monotone,
Or the unaccented megaphone
Of the train dispatcher's soulless drone,
Sounds which beat upon the mind
With a flat and dull relentless grind?
As a cliff wave-washed by the constant sea
Is determined, so it was with me.
You'll laugh when I tell? Don't laugh at me,
Not all souls know infinity,
But some walk sightless down the road
And stumble along with a blind man's load
Of faltering fear for the step ahead,
Small souls who think that the dead are dead,
And do not, cannot see ahead
Where long eternity sits crowned,
Life's little moments grouped around,
Of many parts a perfect whole,
And beckons on the seeing soul.

Two tiny rooms, efficiency,
We slept in one and one to me
Was kitchen, parlor, sitting room,
And at the last a living tomb.

The month of April was the best,
A straying robin built her nest

Upon my window sill. She sang
Three notes which in my memory rang
From days long past when I, too, sang.

With May she left, and once again
My heart re-echoed with the pain
Of boundless soundless quietudes,
And all foreshortened interludes
When George came home and ate and read,
Said he was tired and went to bed.
Naught else to do, I joined him there,
A cold unlovely married pair.

June came, George said we needed ice,
He said we needn't mind the price.
And so the chest was filled, I set
A pan to catch the rivulet
Of melted ice which dripped away
Like stalactites till judgment day.

Drip, drip, day, night, drip, drip,
Silence, silence, drip, drip,
My life took on a dull grey tone,
Dripping, dripping monotone.
The dripping ice shut in my soul
As ice shuts in the Southern pole.

George would not understand, I knew,
Helpless, I did what I could do
To check the sound, I fixed a board
So that the drops ran downward toward
The pan and did not splash or drip.
Once more I felt the silence slip
Over my soul and under me—
There was no death on Calvary!

I lay awake, the silence fell
As heavy as the chains of Hell,
I listened and the silence seemed
A thousand hammers I had dreamed,
The hammers all resolved to one.
Heaven forbid, O Mary's Son!
The board I'd fixed so well had slipped,
The whole night through the waters dripped,
That morning George gave me a kiss
And I left George for this, for this.

Excitement, change, variety,
Christ, but I paid to get the three,
And now I offer them to Thee,
Pity me, Christ,
Oh, pity me.



Lois Seyster Montross

Codes

They wove for me a little cloak
Of worsted brown and strong,
They wove it firm, these kindly folk
That I might wear it long.

I, who would dance in gossamer
With poplars on a hill,
Or wander naked with the wind,
They clothe in worsted still.

Dead Leaves

What was that song the viols played the moon,
All fair and golden-lipped its haunting tune?
There was no song, no showering notes of light,
Only the mad wind weeping in the night.

What was that love that gleamed like summer rain
Through dangling shadows—ecstasy and pain?
There was no love nor pain nor ecstasy,
Only dead leaves that whispered mournfully.

To Charmian, Unborn

My body folded tawny wings
To walk with slow, uncertain feet;
My body put off silken things
For linen, humble and discreet;

My songs that were as butterflies,
So frail they bore but phantom gold,
Cling to the earth and dare not rise
Out of the withered grass and mold;

My laugh is dumb that fluttered wild,
My hands are bare of shining rings,
My soul goes fasting that a child
Be born for silk and song and wings.

Lapidary

Thine eyes, beneath arched ebony,
Are jade and lapis lazuli,
With turquoise shadows under them.

So locked, thy fingers' fligree
Enclosing palms of ivory
Are perfect caskets for a gem.

Ladyes so like their jewels grown
Have flawless hearts . . . of blood-red stone.

The Stranger

She is back in her shuttered house again,
Weary and alone.
Talk of the life she led in distant cities
Wreaths up like smoke from the chimney.
She walks in her little garden at sundown,
In a torn, black lace dress.
The sparrows gossip about her
And the tulips whisper she is—queer!



Have you known what snow is?
Have you known it as a sweet, warm drink
That puts to rest unrestfulness?

Have you known it as white, unscented hands
Holding jasmine flowers
Gently?

Have you heard it a low chord
Sounded above the city's grotesque
Hoarseness?

Have you felt the serenity of snow
Assuaging
Your fever?

Tonight I walked in the snow-calmed street . . .
Tonight I know what snow is.

You Say Death Is Not Sad?

You say death is not sad? You have not died,
Followed a bier tall-piled with broken dreams,
Nor known why those that laughed at death
still cried

Like wild birds bleeding in their loved marsh
streams.

Perhaps you reasoned, "These had thoughts,
drew breath,

Sorrowing so, they yet were living most,"—

This is the paradox! Sight of death is death,
Not the forerunner but the dread, grim ghost.
You are as one who, deeming Spring was all,
Warming his days beneath the unchanging sun
And turquoise skies as drowsy as Bagdad,
First saw the frost's white, steely work begun,
First heard the poplars weeping in the fall,
And said, "Be still! October is not sad."

Galleon Dawn

Blue day, high day,

Sailing past mine eyes,

Like a graceful galleon

Bound for paradise—

New day, tall day,

Tell your cargo's worth,

Let your masthead clip for me

Horizons of mirth

Slow ship, go ship,

But let me first surmise

What you bear: Nippon ware,

Peacock vanities,

Mauve silk, pale fan,
Brought by wavering caravan,
Indolent perfume, Mandarin dyes,
Ivory carved in Hindustan,
All unload and load again
For my hungry eyes.
I shall stand upon the shore,
Fleet day, fair day,
Knowing that you come no more
Down this way—
I shall see your proud head
Specked upon the skies,
I shall stand with bowed head
And hungry, hidden eyes,
Graceful, graceful galleon—
So faint . . . so far . . . so wise.

"I Am A Hedonist, God Wot!"

I am a Hedonist, God wot!
Never a man shall say me not.
E'en Heav'n's great bowl, it could not measure
The pleasure I do gain from pleasure.
Why should I have for other goal
Purification of the soul?
Pure souls, like maids, are very dull—
Souls do not make man's belly full.

Sir Soul cannot a lyric write,
And singing rhyme is my delight;
Methinks, Sir Soul has meager cheer,
Quaffing no ale nor rum nor beer;
Sir Soul is never hale to meet,
Nor loiters in his straitened street.

His righteous eye of flashing steel
Doth make me like a school-boy feel!

But Pleasure, there's a goodly wight—
I trow he chaffers all the night,
And in two minutes they do so
Can turn a sprightly roundelay.
No song there is he doth not know,
He listeth where the wind do blow,
He struts and hath no humble thought
And knows no thing of "must" or "ought."
Good lack! I link me oft with Pleasure
And count his laugh my primest treasure;
Together do we view the moon,
That swaggert rogue in cloud doubloon;
We dine upon a pun with zest,
Sup pungently on dripping jest;
And when all good folk are in bed,
We 'gin a merrie bout instead,
For tongues wag best when liquored loose,
Which is of agéd wine the use.

I count Sir Pleasure such a friend
That to him I my gold do lend,
Knowing full well that on the morrow
All unashamed, he more will borrow.
I labor earnestly each day
That I, at night, his debts may pay,
And snubbing cold Sobriety,
Forget my good wife Piety,
And when she chides me for my sin,
I know my fault but say within:
"Her sad arraignment soon will end,
And I shall quickly join my friend,
And mistress, blithe Inconsequence,

(No cousin to spare Innocence).”
Thus do I seek them without fail:
Mine Host, John Barleycorn, is hale
And jovial and lends his Inne
To many a quaint, delicious sin—

*(Hearken the wind toy with the leaves,
Hearken the faint rain on the eaves!
The candle flaming straight and sure,
Doth make our little room secure. . . .)*

—My fair wretch spreads her satins out
And taunts me with a pretty pout,
A scented nosegay hides her face,
Her velvet shoon are hid in lace
And bending closer then, I see
Her eyes and ankles peep at me!
Beside the chimney, 'stride a chair,
Droll Pleasure tosses back his hair,
Stately and grave as any lord,
He strums a fancied harpsichord
And halts with gesture and grimace;
While on his brown and weathered face
The very shadows love to trace
His precious moods, so various,
Mad, fanciful, hilarious—

*(Hearken the wind wooing the leaves
With speech now tender, now jocose,
Hearken the faint rain on the eaves!
Inconsequence, my child, come close. . . .)*

—His laughter is a mellow wine,
Heady but sweet, withal benign.
Thumping the deal till goblets ring,
He shouts wild verses. Hear him sing:

“Life’s no slice of pale, white cake,
Gramercy! Gramercy!
Life’s no pastry quick to bake,
Tirra-lirra, gramercy!
Life’s a hunk of blackened bread
Gramercy, that’s true!
Give me butter thick on one side,
Not thinly spread on two! . . . ”

This is Sir Pleasure, this is he
Who owns the very heart of me.
I marvel at such folk as choose
His gaiety and grace to lose—
Sir Soul doth frown on song and color,
He dines with Duty and with Dolor.

I claim few bounties for my due,
Old World, our Squire, doth pay me few—
The rascal stabbed me, robbed me twice,
And cheated me with leaden dice—
Yet I will grant him any fee
Save losing Pleasure’s company,
And never a man shall say me not.
I am a Hedonist, God wot!

Missie

“She listened to his verses, smiled charmingly on his two years’ courtship, and at the end of two years married the waiter instead.”

—“Ernest Dowson”
by ARTHUR SYMONS.

Wharf-rat, gamin, coker, the leprous and the lame,
Stevedore and stoker, he knew them all by name.

For him the shadows lengthened to serpents on the
floor,

For him the shadows strengthened to fiends around
the door.

Pricked by dreams appalling, mad cold and mock-
ing heat,
He wandered, calling, calling, through the smoul-
dering street.

His thoughts like blood ran gushing till Missie
calmly wrought
Magic of stilling, hushing—her eyes could stanch
his thought.

Head on Missie's bosom, he fell to troubled rest—
She dreamed not he was kissing Cleopatra's breast.

It was not Missie, Missie, dove-white and ripe per-
fumed,
Nor candles, feckless candles, the twilit place
illumed:

For Sappho, Helen, Circe glided in golden file! . .
He dreamed while Missie, dreamless, smiled her
rose-lipped smile.

Her cheeks were pale, lost lilies, a fleur-de-lis her
hand,
Her charms were aching rapture—she could not
understand . . .

Oh, when his fiends came thronging her touch
could make him whole,
But when he parched with longing, she could not
slake his soul.

Missie, unawoken, played her idle part,
Nor guessed that she had broken a poet's heart.

Empty Spools

Behind the red glass panels of their door
No light intrigues us. Now we hear no more
The husky saucy voice of blonde Renee
Winding its thread on spools from day to day.

I looked inside their rooms when all was done:
Trunk taken, cab called—whirr!—and they were
gone—

The dressing table, mirror-eyed and vain;
The stripped brass bed where stripped brass love
had lain,
Quarrelsome and shiny with its new bold look;

The gloomy kitchen appetite forsook;
The pans she hated and the wobbly shelves
His unaccustomed hands had nailed, themselves.
So easy-visaged—silken, blue peignoir;
Odd rounded petulance her shoulders wore:
“Don’t set that clock so early!”

“I’ll be late!”

“Now when you meet me, don’t you make me wait!”

“My God! You wait for *him*!”

“You can’t forget

To throw *him* in my face—so jealous yet!”

Recriminations, tears . . . but volatile,
One jests and laughs, a punning imbecile.
They seize the ukulele and they sing,
Harmonics crude, vague sweetness of the string:

*“I wonder who’s buying the wine
For lips that I used to call mine,
I wonder if she ever tells him of me,*

I wonder who's kissing her now?"

Even in song, their strained determination
To be abreast of high sophistication,
He used vaudeville dialogue, blasé,
Profane, to woo the nice ear of Renee!
Outside the million little wands of rain,
By necromancy turn the streets to glass,
Where golden headlights, molten fluxions pass,
Leap, flash and vanish, merge and part again—
Inside . . . they sing of Egypt . . . Araby . . .
Oh, Avalon! Oh, lapping coral sea! . . .
He falls to swearing dully at the key.

The rounded petulance her shoulders wore
Still haunts the crimson panels of their door—
Look! Are those the empty spools upon the floor
Bare of their tight-wound voice?
Did blonde Renee
Grow silent suddenly,
. . . And slip away?

Meditations of a Dump-Heap

Nobody knows the innermost thoughts of a dump-
heap,
For I am refuse and refuse is myself—
My body and my soul are one
Whatever the dualists contend.
I know I am scum, I know I am filth,
I know I stink
And hobnob with the rats.
I like rats.
They are more subtle than the dogs
Who visit garbage cans . . .

I had a previous existence:
Ages past,
In the strange cycle of life
When my ego was in chaos
I lived in garbage cans and dreamed
Of being free!
Foolishly, I said to myself, "There is another life
Vaster and more coherent,
A life lived on a windy slope,
Spread full to the stars and close to the clean dirt,
A paradise for the body after the soul is sloughed
off!"
The dogs were Orthodox and quoted Plato—
Victorian beasts!
. . . They were wrong.

After travail and a torrent of weeping,
After a season of madness and sleeping,
After a longing and lethargy seized me,
After the god of the dump cart teased me,
Out of the pain was peacefulness risen,
Out of the anguish, rest.

Sit down rats and listen—
Hear the lake beating the strong chorus:
Life, life, life, life, life!
Not one bit of garbage but a million,
Not one longing but all longing,
Not one note of laughter but the gamut of mirth,
my birthright and my bondage!
My tales are greater than the Mabinogion—
Let me be a troubadour to you, rats,
Creep into the lush weeds at my feet
And listen, listen—

Listen tenderly to the delicate lyrics I can sing you,
Listen cynically to the story of this old tin basin,
Listen mirthfully to the story of this broken plaster
saint,

Listen with hushed hearts, to the tale of Maryelle,
Yes, be hushed by that,
Be hushed by that. . .

Look at the moon a-tiptoe on the lake-line,
Quivering, young and breathless she steals in
silence

Behind the lacy marsh grass and the goblin dirt-
mounds,

Stepping in careful rhythm on the sharp rocks
Lest she might wound her white, white, white, white
feet!

Last night she paused and dipped her fingers in
the water

And flung the tattered spray high on the shore,
And laughed so low, so low I could not hear.

You moon, I could not hear, I tell you!

Why do you laugh so low?

You are breaking my heart.

Every night I long to hear you laugh aloud,

Every night in the saffron twilight

You steal among the weeds, inscrutable vir-
gin,—

Cold, ah, cold you are—your soul a wisp of
gauzy aloofness,

And a surge of hatred beats me into madness!

And I hate your frosty soul, you moon un-
conquered!

I could crush your breasts with my two hands,
And hurl you into the lake you torture with
your calm image

And you would either laugh or cry and I
could say:

"I—I have made the moon articulate;

She smiled. She wept. And I am satisfied."

Yet . . . she is a moon and I am a dump-heap.

. . . Be quiet, look at the mauve tendrils of smoke
Twining their viny path about the latticed chimneys.
Tonight the gray water flows into the gray sky
And the surf echoes the whispering of the little
ingenuous clouds

Who play upon the sky's pale beach of saffron

With stars they think are fish,

And ask the big clouds silly questions about why
the earth is pirouetting

And how they were born and when they must die.

(Hide in the weeds until the dog is gone, rats,

He's creeping down the road now,

A smug, Philistine smile on his face.)

No, not even the moon can hurt my heart tonight—

And memories are beating with impotent hands at
the flood-gates of my voice—

Oh, let me rid myself of these turbulent thoughts!

Come, memories, get you down the Romany road of
remembrance

Out of my heart,

Out of my voice,

Into the night,

Into you, my listeners.

I was thinking of Maryelle.

You stand before me, Maryelle, so almost real

I think I see your dusk eyes vagued with dreaming.

There is a purple shadow on your throat

Like something half-remembered, half-forgotten . . .

Somehow I fear an idle wind to blow

Lest it should tear that shadow into petals.

Maryelle! Maryelle! . . .

I am a maundering idiot, drunk with quaffing life,
But life was a damned good vintage, old and
mellow.

It gave me a red nose but I am glad I drank it.

Runners

Look! The runner is running down hill—

Faster, with slack limbs,

Faster, with tense limbs,

Whichever way—faster!

Arms elbowed, fists doubled, breath a panorama of
desire for speed,

Each breath a new picture of his increasing urge,

Eyes half shut like two crouching beasts,

Lips parted, nostrils a-quiver, hair mobile to the
fingers of the wind!

Night is running with him . . . look, have you
seen her?

Naked of all but beauty she leaps a-tiptoe through
the pear trees,

Sways a breathless moment at the edge of the dark
brook,

Smelling the piquant gentians,

Spreading full her arms to the coolness—

Now to the road, the curving down hill road,

Shadowed with memories, fetishes, mysteries,

Folksed with goblins, pixies, fays—

The little people look up and whisper, "See, our
splendid queen is dreaming toward us!" . . .

Night is running down hill with the runner.

He runs like a patient tiger now,
Tongue lolling,
Eyes gold with fire,
Pat-pat-patting down the steep hill,
On flesh-padded feet he goes,
Still and easy and breathless he goes,
Silent as death,
Missing no one of his measured, graceful paces.

Have you seen Youth running with the runner?
Where night runs there is Youth,
Youth with white face upturned to the stars,
Hands out to break the prickling bushes,
Skin torn from mullein-weed, wildrose, mint and
thistle,
The wet cobwebs cling across his forehead,
He stumbles on, sobbing,
Unknowing why he goes.
Following . . . leading . . . he is running with
the runner down hill

The sheaves like idle peasants at the roadside
Hold up a moon lantern to stare at the flying limbs,
Winging the road.
They see a new hastener now,
One who runs without panting, on quiet feet at the
last of the caravan,
One who runs looking ahead, never behind,
Never sobbing nor murmuring but gaining, always
gaining;
He will pass Youth
And put his hand on the runner's glistening, sweat-
ing shoulder,
Gentle and dignified he will say, "We are here."

*Look! Have you seen what it is to be a runner
Who cannot pause till a hand thuds on your
 shoulder,
And smears the sweat you shed like blood
And stops you with the goal far distant!
And a voice cries: "We are here"—*

To be stabbed with beauty in curled
 apple petals and turn cold
 as you lie hushed by sky hands
 in the lush orchard grass;
To know suddenly that you must rise and run
 never to stop running till the last hastener
 overtakes you;
To tremble at an aching note in the unguarded
 voice of a thrush;
To feel a wound where no poniard came;
To laugh exultantly at the chanted litany of the
 locust high in the poplars;
To see that Youth and Night are beckoning you
 to the road;
To distrust Youth and his hot breath so close to
 your throat;
To fear the dizzying eyes of night and the intoxica-
 tion of her breasts;
To find the road merging into a swift descent
So there is no turning back, no slowing nor
 stopping,
Faster, with slack limbs,
Faster, with tense limbs,
Whichever way—faster!

This is the runner who cannot pause till a hand
 thuds on his shoulder . . .

Look! Death is running with the runner down hill.

Taj-Mischa

[I.]

The earth is like some idle Oriental
Who smokes his hookah gaily without care
For any money-maddened Occidental
Who rushes here and scampers yon and there.

Lie still, fat earth, so meaningless, so gentle,
Rest on your elbow, watch men rend their hair,
Nothing to you the fight of tax and rental,
Nothing to you the skimp to eat and wear,
Nothing to you the cost of fish and lentil,
The privilege of roof and bed and chair.

October earth, you leisured Oriental,
Man would come rest with you, but does not dare;
See how he gasps and runs, poor Occidental,
Gaping ahead with absent, fretted stare.

[II.]

Let me sit with you here upon the slope,
Taj-Mischa, gazing in your crystal ball,
Let me look clear and see if this is all,
 (The crystal ball is but the sky,
 Soft, pale, ingenuous and shy.)

Well, then this ancient tale of Hell and God,
And rotting bodies gaining from the sod
Some potency to rise and live again—
The story had its birth with shivering men
Who hated truth and shunned its healthy glare.
They feared themselves; hyena-toothed despair

Howled at their heels; they found all beauty
 "mental,"
Shunned bodies, warped facts, labelled earth-things
 lies,
And died—nor heard again of paradise.
They never knew you, idle Oriental,
And now you mock them calmly, without care.
Yes Let your mystic smile be slow and
 gentle.
They would have loved your rest. They did not
 dare.

[III.]

Let me break open now with ruthless hands
The silver wrappings of my woven dream—
I long, Taj-Mischa, for that web to seem
Precious and rare, as from another land.
 (I am like some old immigrant woman
 Who pulls a shawl from a dull, lacquered
 chest,
And says, "New things are good—but this was
 fashioned
In mine own country where they weave them
 best.")
I wrought this rug, Taj-Mischa, from the strandings
I made in mine own country. All apart
I sat and drew the little threads of longing,
And some of them I raveled from my heart.
 Do you see, Taj-Mischa, do you see—
That saffron sky, the purple clouds that pass,
The workman silhouetted and the grass
Like delicate lace swirling about his heedless
 feet . . .
The still pool quivering at the sun's trespass,

The doves low-flying o'er the russet wheat?
Then see this fringe of moons, and each was minted
From a new gold as love has ebbed and flowed:
Nothing alloy and nothing poor or stinted,
Much of it burned; but much, at least, has glowed.

The first moon came with my first love,
Pale and bright;
We plucked this moon from a pine-tree
On a spring night;
One moon hung like a lantern,
All crimson round,
And neither spoke;
One moon whispered my last love's name,
My heart fell to the ground . . .
And broke.

The country road, curved like a woman's cheek,
The stark trees in majestic devastation,
Iron gray like an old, old man, and bleak
With stern thoughts, yet with elation
That storms turn from its branches yet—defeated!

[IV.]

Was it not good, Taj-Mischa, to sit weaving
The tangled threads of dawn in dusk and gloom?
I knew that very soon I should be leaving
And come no more, no more unto the loom.
The rug I made an alien will complete,
Or lose the skeins or tear the crimson woof—
I shall not care, with coffin-lid for roof!
And you, fat Oriental earth whom I have known
So intimately, you will smoke and smile
Nor will your face be sad a little while;
Your pipe will taste as ripe when I am gone.

. . . Yet, some day, pounding in an artery,
May you not yet feel the dusty blood of me?
Ah, when the worms and maggots have their due,
Taj-Mischa . . . I become a part of—you.

“I Wear a Crimson Cloak Tonight”

*In vain they are trying to make account of Alan Seeger.
He was silent and none seemed to know him. Only, there
is a tale that he was seen one night in the slums of Bos-
ton wearing a red cloak.*

I wear a crimson cloak tonight,
Villon, Villon, look down and see
I wander insolent and free,
Free as the wind in Montfauçon—
And is thy droll ghost there, Villon,
Thy spirit as my flesh bedight?
Ah, would I might lock arms with thee,
I wear a crimson cloak tonight.

Marlowe, in doublet slashed with gold,
Insouciant as a drunken star,
Surely no Lethean mandates bar
This life from death, as dark from light?
I wear a crimson cloak tonight,
Bold is my heart, my trappings bold—
Thy rich, bright laugh I hear afar,
Marlowe, in doublet slashed with gold.

I wear a crimson cloak tonight,
Dowson, Baudelaire, Verlaine!
I, too, have seen Octobers wane
And watched decadent Love pass by
With naked feet and drooping eye,

With throat of laughter, lips of light;
Trembling to hear thy songs again
I wear a crimson cloak tonight.

The fainting moon is wan and white,
Our silken courtesan, the moon—
Ah, brothers, hast thou watched her swoon?
Over the stars ye lean to tell:
Death is an endless villanelle
That Life frees poet-hands to write
I'll join thy vagabondia soon,
I wear the crimson cloak tonight!



Wm. B. Mowery

Hokku

WALKING ON SKULLS

I would not carry clay from the far slope
Nor stones from the river-bed.

I would build my House of pine-tree boughs
And fragrant calomel rushes.

The small cloud that dallied in the western sky
Meant no good for me.

I stood by a sheltering rock watching mad winds
Tear my House to shreds.

At night in the tornado-wreckage
The dead, upturned faces are white.

Through I travel down a pleasant valley
At night the faces will be white.

These dead white faces will lie in the wreckage
Youth made a mansion of.

Yea, I will carry stones and clay
There will be no more faces.

[I]

FAULTS

There are thunderclouds on the sky around me;
Overhead it is clear.

[II]

POETRY

Quick white snakes are playing in the dark clouds;
And through my soul a song leaps.

[III]

VANISHING

Where is the cloud I saw last evening;
Or the Girl I used to love?

VERSE

In the fields flit butterflies; in my heart, songs.
Behold! I have caught one.

The keen pencils on my desk are greyhounds
That race after little songs.

VANITY

Big Jake, strongest man in the steel yard,
Swallowed a fly and went home sick.

FRIENDSHIP

The robins are very friendly now;
Our cherry trees are turning red.

UNCERTAINTY

Is that a soft viola singing
Or my friend reading lyric verses?

RAIN

A few big drops go thumping by
Like scouts before a heavy rank;
The cock is running for the barn;
The old dog on the grassy bank
Neglects to snap the teasing fly;
A woman gathers up in haste
Some clothes spread on the grass to dry;
A farmer frantic in his hay
Is swearing that it did not stay
As clear as it was all last week
And give him just another day;
And Barefoot races down the lane
To get the cows before the rain;
And evening comes before her turn,
And long before the sun has set
The candles in the farm-house burn.

Chas. Edmund Noyes

Tonight

Tonight, I hold the thought of you
As though it were a fragile thing;
If you were all of melody
I could not sing.

But when my lips are turned to earth,
My heart to Love again,
Somewhere beyond all memory
You will remain.

Song

While yet the silver cord is fast
And the golden bowl unbroken
Or ever the silken night is past
Or the smooth steel words be spoken,
There is time for dreams and for satin dreams,
There is time for fantasy,
And I shall write on the faithless streams
A little song of thee.
And when it fades as the streams flow on
I think I shall not care,
But you will know when the hour is gone
That once a song was there.

Demiurge

After they're gone, the fine despised illusions,
Love, and the dreams we say are never true—

When laughter is no more a careless fountain
And you are only you;
When these things are, (as we have known they'll
be),
Then will there be an end to all delusions?
And shall we see (as we are sure we'll see)
The whole of our white-gleaming distant mountain,
Place where our dreams are, standing very near,
Misty through clouds no longer, plain and cold,
No fairyland, but dreams we've had, made clear,
When we are old?
Perhaps we travel ever toward the place,
In death attaining one, the last bright dream;
And yet I think we could not bear to face
A time when fancies quite unveiled should gleam
So close at hand.
Blindness, I think, would cut the light before
We saw, or that dim mist where fancies stand
Vanish, and show behind an empty space,
Smooth desert, where we two should dream no
more,
There left to wander on forever, groping
In that bright land with no far mystery,
For some mirage-like trick of memory
And vanished hoping.



Lem Phillips

Before Sailing

Let's drink a toast to ourselves, then, brothers,
A toast to men of our kind,

For we'll see no more of the others
When the pier head's left behind.

Let's drink a toast to the sailor-man
In a draught of fiery liquor,
For we'll soon have done with the landsman clan
When the salt sea crusts our slicker.

The landsman's kind is not our kind,
He is bound by an earthen fetter,
And we are as free as the heaving brine
And we count our freedom better,—

Aye—better than the glowing hearth
Are the blue green seas we roam,
And better the stinging gale from the north
Than the love of a lass—and home.

Aye, a loving lass and a hearthstone warm
Are the strength of a man ashore,
But the strength of a ship in a rocking storm
Is ours, and we ask no more.

So, Drink! On the next high tide we are sailing,
We who were born to roam
And our lives like a white frothed wake go tra ling
Till the sea has claimed its own.

Sugar

Niggers sweating under the burning sun
In Cuban cane-fields.
Guinea stevedores in the stinking hold of a sugar
ship—

Stumbling under three hundred bags.
Polacks shuffling, heavy footed,
Changing shifts at a refinery.
Girls in a long row—
With tired eyes
And drooping shoulders
Filling gaudy colored boxes.
Another girl
Leaning back in the soft cushions of a limousine
Offers Fido a bonbon.

A Scholar

I have red blood in my veins
And a strong body
Fit for work.
I have a broad back
And thick muscled arms
That can handle a stoker's slice bar.
My hand has known the feel of the throttle.
I have been the master of power.
I have stood between the roaring cranks
And been not afraid.
I have strong gripping fingers
That have held me firm
On the swaying mast.
I have skill in my hands to steer a steady course
In a stormy sea.
I have eyes to mark a distant light
And a deep-throated voice to report it.

I have red blood in my veins
And a strong body
Fit for work,

Yet I have put oval panes of glass
Before my eyes,
That I might drink a diluted cup of life
From a printed page——
—— God! I am lazy!

Earth Hunger

Wind of the Spring,
Soft warm,
Toys in my hair like fingers of love.

Rich smells of earth
Ascend to my nostrils
From the greening sod.

I fling myself face down
On your broad bosom, Old Mother.
I stretch wide my arms
And clutch the black mould with my fingers,
To feel that I hold you.

Hold me close to you,
Oh, broad-breasted Mother of All.
Let me feel my kinship
To the sweet-smelling loam.
Let me feel the tumult of life
Expanding within you,
Reverberate in my own bosom.

Make me humble before you, Old Mother,
And arrogant before conventions of man.
Fill my mind with your enduring truth,
And cleanse it of his sophistries.

Let me creep closer,
Oh, all-containing Earth.

I bare my breast to feel the soft moist soil.
I bury my face
To breathe deep of your fragrance—
Enraptured to be a part of you.

Winter Sunset

The sun sinks cold in the grey sky's field,
Glazing it o'er with a brassy shield.

My heart, I think, is cold and hard
As the brassy shield of the sky,
For I thought of myself and my own reward
And passed a beggar by.

Spring Song

Fresh is the wind in my face tonight;
Sweet is the breath of the new green sod;
Gold in the blue is the moon's fair light;
Soft under-foot are the paths I trod.

Old as the valleys, the song I sing;
Life in the mould of the earth set free;
Love born anew and the lark a-wing
Spring in the wind and the heart of me.

Old is the song of the Spring and youth,
Yet would I sing it again to you:
Time is the gauge and the test of truth;
True is my song and my love for you.

Still They Think of War

Still they think of war,
And two healing years of peace

Have not yet purged the gore-soaked fields of
France.

Empty trenches stretch half the breadth of Europe,
Like raw gaping wounds in the green earth.

Sightless eyes hideous behind dark glasses;—

Coat sleeves hanging empty—

Workmen fainting at their tasks,

Clutching at their throats in agony—

Hissing to their comrades,

“Gassed—Argonne.”

Mankind shattered with bleeding bandaged head—

And still they think of war.

I lie in the sweet smelling meadows

Of my own prairies

To listen to the meadow-lark

Sing promises of Spring,

And over the rolling hill-top

Down a narrow lane

Rides a squadron of cavalry,

Their sabers clanking,

Hungry for blood,

And the hoofs of the horses

Resounding on the soft earth

Like the beat of a muffled drum

In a dead march—

Still they think of war.

To Pain

What though thy presence lines my face, O Pain,

And racks my aching body, filled with ills,

I shrink not from thy power; I know it fills

My soul with wisdom and a proud disdain,

For petty human frailties that reign
In this base flesh, o'er which my conquering will
A faster fort from knowing thee doth build.
I welcome thee, that bring triumphs attained.

I know that thou and Sorrow bring to me,
Great visions, born of sleepless nights when I
Lie ill abed and hear the world roar by;
Full visions, only thou can'st make me see,
And though thou bringst me age that should be
youth,
I welcome thee, for thou art life and truth.



Raymond A. Seng

Summer Rain

Rain and the gray mist swirling,
Swirling over the lake,
Thin waves softly curling
With never a whitened break;

Drenched crows winging blackly
Into the leaden sky,
Poplars swaying slackly,
Swallows that wheel and cry.

Over the days you're calling
Singing your wonderful lays,
Weaving your spell entralling,
Strangely sweet rainy days.

Song

A lady lived in Lesbos
A long, long age ago,
A lady lived in Lesbos,
I loved that lady so.

But she was made of blue sky,
And I was made of clay,
And she sang songs like moonlight
All the golden day.

A lady lived in Lesbos,
That lady is a star,
O lady thou of Lesbos,
I still love thee afar.



Bliss Seymour

Spring on The Prairie

Spring across the prairie, with pussy-willows flying,
Nests of golden glory in the hearts of daffodils,
Rolling green of meadows, and the breezes sigh-
ing,—
(I wonder if the redbud is aflame against the
hills!)

Sky against the prairie, and apple-blossoms blow-
ing,

Meadow-larks a' carolling that all the world's in
bloom,
Robins, mad with melody, where the spring is
glowing,
(But, oh, to hear the whip-poor-wills, wailing
through the gloom!)

Singing in the sunshine, laughter in the gloaming,
Breath of flower-fragrance, through the dreaming
air,
Sun upon the prairie, and all the world is homing,
(But spring creeps down the hillsides, and I
cannot be there!)

Ghost Night

There's a tricky moon in the sky tonight,
And the world is doing a thousand things;
The trees, lifting longing arms to light,
Sway to the song that the darkness sings.

The fireflies are loves which were never born;
The moon is more cruel than dead dreams are,—

* * * *

I've tangled my hair in the white hawthorn,
And wounded my heart on a pointed star!

The Philanderer

I remember Philip's eyes,
Brown as russet-drying furze—
Ah, but he was worldly wise,
King of all Philanderers!

He'd a sweeping throat, and hair
 Burnt like butter-nuts in fall,
And a fancy light as air,
 But a conscience—none at all.

He could drink the ruddy wine
 Of a barmaid's laughing lips,
Or, as easily, kiss the shrine
 Of a vestal's finger tips.

Once the fingers were possessed
 He must needs sit by her side.
Russet eyes could do the rest.
 (Vestals were his special pride.)

There was once a maid, folks say,
 Scorned him as he sauntered by—
Let them tell it as they may—
 I am sure it wasn't I!

Wonder-Walking

There is a wonder in walking home,
 And gathering dreams all along the way,
Choosing the furnishings for my heart.
 . . . Here are the ones that I found today . . .

A house with a rain-barrel painted blue;
 A crooked brass lantern over a door;
The ruffle of clouds in a gentle sky;
 The wind-silvered leaves of a sycamore.

A crippled boy, whistling a marching song;
 A quilt, sewn with hollyhocks on a line;

Then, sudden and sweet, from a weathered hedge,
The drifting perfume of the eglantine.

There is a wonder in coming home,
Bringing in dreams from along the way,
Colorful tapestries for my heart.
. . . These are the ones that I found today!

The Stadium

Like autumn leaves that flutter and grow still,
The rooters hush and sink into their places,
The gripping moment over. In their faces,
(Young faces, burning with the combat's thrill,
And yet quite strangely old and sober-eyed)—
No thought dares enter of another game
When killing and not scoring was their aim,
And all of them fought on the selfsame side.

Yet we remember them, and all those others
Who lie in France. The Stadium's grey stones
Forbid us to forget; the shadow tones
Across the field make, living and dead, brothers.
And in the shouting we recall a day
When death came to the loser in the play.



Constance Miriam Syford

Tints and Undertones

Cosmos and daisies calico-wise
In a dull gray field of fern;

Sprinklings of rose on a morning of mist
Relaxing my passion in dream;
Green soft leaves and tall grass reeds
Cooling my head in their shade—
I lie watching the wall-paper move.

Mirrors of rain—
Broken shadows
Of quivering trees
Restrained—

Still and naked, unashamed,
The trees look down
Into the white mirror
On the ground.

Silhouette

One black bird
On a sharply broken bough,
Leaning out to touch the sky
Against a ragged shore,—
Meadows of marsh-grass,
Sudden peering necks of woods,
And then a city panting,
Emitting gasps of hot, quick breath,
Thick with the odor of oil and gas.—

Crackling locusts under yellow street lamps,
Flickering, flickering,—
Popping rubber tires, their parched dry tongues
Licking the wet, oily-skinned pavements.
One pale woman
In a crowded ocean city
Leaning out to touch the heavens.

Picture

When I saw her wrapped in ermine,
Perched near a soft blue bowl
Distinguished by some golden-rod,
She reminded me of a white parrot
I once saw all puffed in fluffy plumage.
Poised daintily on one foot,
Head and eyes and golden beak
Turned sidewise
Against a branch of sharp, stiff pine.
It was in a tea-room, too
On a neuter-colored wall
As dull as she.



I know a road
All filigree,
That goes in summer
Foliaged,
Down to meet another road
That moves along demurely
Like a maiden trembling
In her stiff and dainty dotted muslin.
And I, too,
All a-quiver,

In the summer,
Have followed these two winding roads
That stroll along together
Just as lovers wander far
To find some old, old trysting place.
But still I wander.

Boutonnieres

Some men
Wear their cigars like scars
Burnt into seared holes of mouths,
As heroes—proudly.

And some
Wear them like pedestal lamps
Rooted in a desert of a face.

Still others
Pucker up all their being
Into the gleam of that distant
Little light.

Some women
Wear their loves like scars
Burnt into their seared, hollow souls,
As saints—devoutly.

And some
Wear them like lofty signal lights
Gleaming from their desert faces.

Still others
Pucker up all their being
To the visioned dream of that love
They know not.

And some men
Decorate themselves with women's loves
Stuck carelessly, like railroad tickets,

Instead of feathers, in their hats.

And some women
Decorate themselves with men's loves
Worn like badges on their bosoms.

And some men and women
Decorate themselves with life
Worn like a flower in the lapel of Eternity.



Laurence F. Triggs

Burn Candles, Love

Burn candles, Love, incessantly,
For love is dead; Come, bind the hair
In wreaths of bay; No one will care—
Burn candles, Love, incessantly.

Triad

Comes a day when Memory
Is all I have,
I want these things to be:
To remember great men without envy,
To remember women without desire,
And to remember you
As on that splendid day in Spring;
Without regret . . .

The One Remains

There is a rift within the lute,
The music falters and is done;
I come to find your lips are mute
But on your hair the setting sun
Enmeshes strands of mauve and gold,
Translucent lights, the stars ascend,
And love and song are as of old—
Where Beauty is there is no end.



Roberta Wagner

Saffron

People are colors; saffron colored you are,
Like a pine-rimmed lake at sundown
With the gold sky shining in its depths;
Like shimmering Indian summer and maize;
Like topazes;
Like desert poppies holding the sun;
Like the great amber, orange moon
Rising behind black trees—
Saffron colored you are.

Bruce Weirick

Lines Written in a Crypt of the Art Institute, Chicago.

Here in the quiet of the Middle Age
There is a haunting solace sweet as rest,
No warfare grim disturbs their heritage
Among the solemn counsels of the blest.
Sad saints and sacred angels hover o'er
These tombs where kings are laid in modest state,
And the dim Christ in mildness evermore
Broods with his cross above the minster gate.

But soft! a little from this crypt I see
Three young Greek statues white and marble pure,
Naked as grace and as the ocean free,
Yet in their calm divine, as gods secure;
Oh beauty, wonder, rapture, life aflame,
How hath thy sunlight struck these saints to shame.

Lines Written in Early Spring While Under the Influence of Philosophy

What is a tree, save touch and sight?
But touch and sight's in me!
Then tree is too; if not, what right
Have I to talk of tree?
An "unperceived perception"—
Get the force of my idee?

Well, put 'em in; put nature in;
Put God in; put in dreams;
What's mind? An idea; in she goes!
In what: In mind! This seems
The limit; dog eats dog! God knows
I write this stuff in reams.

Kick mind out then, I've left, let's see -
Perceptions! One by one
I get them, but don't keep them
There's no "I" to have that fun!
But how can *one* add *two* plus *two*?
It can't! Go get a gun.
Kick out ideas; kick out the mind;
Kick out the inside tree:
Put outside on the outside!
Outside what? We'll let that be
Let's call it all "adjustment,"
"Cues to action," *then* let's see.

Suppose I say "give me a drink."
That's sense! But where's the spree?
In booze, in youse, or in the gink
That makes it! None! You see
It's in the combination—
Something you can't touch nor see.

They call this pragmatism dodge
The latest—here's the tree's
Not outside all, nor inside all,
But in between us: see?
What you are, what the tree is
Ain't the question: but what's *three*.
But this *cue*, *relation*, *attitude*,
I cannot touch nor smell,

Nor taste, nor see, no weigh, nor hear—
Elusive, ain't it? Well—
It's the unknown solves the unknown,
Call it X, or God, or hell.

The Dancer

The dancers whirl about the room,
Elate with motion, eyes alive,
And ladies' dresses like the bloom
Of gorgeous shaken flowers drive
The senses on to ecstasy;
Rich lovely faces here and there
With lips half-parted, smiling, see
The room's a soul of fire and air.
Yet there is one who dances on
With eyes unseeing, dreamily,
And when she goes the dance is gone,
Come back, the dance is revelry.
She dances in the central sun,
And where she walks bright flowers are,
The violet and the rose are one,
And time is like a falling star.

Bruce Weirick

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